

INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS

Key words:

Rejoice 9

Joy 6

Gospel 9

Imprisonment mentioned four times

I heard an interesting anecdote that explains a little about the book of Philippians, and the Apostle Paul quite well. Have you ever watched a football game and noticed players on the sideline talking on the cell phone or headset mic? Well, there is a good reason for this. The quarterback, say—throws an interception. Then he goes off the field, picks up a phone or headset, and starts talking away to someone. Well, the person on the other end of the conversation is someone sitting in the press box high above the field.

The reason is: from there in the press box the whole playing field can be seen. From up there it's easy to see the weaknesses and note what each player is doing on each play. The press box coach can plan a winning strategy using the superior knowledge he has because of the view.

In the press box of life, God looks down on our circumstances. God is trying to do for us exactly what the press box coach is trying to do for that quarterback—give us the big picture.

The apostle Paul understood quite well the importance of the big picture. As he began his letter to the Philippians—in football analogy, he was about to be tackled for a twenty-yard loss!

Paul was under Roman house arrest, chained to a Roman guard and awaiting trial on a capital offense. To make matters worse, he was to appear before the notorious Emperor Nero. Despite all this, we read in this letter that Paul is rejoicing that his circumstance is being used to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ, his Lord and Master.

Now, you may wonder how in the world could Paul be so confident of what was truly going on around him. How can he be so full of joy walking through this kind of adversity?

The answer is the same as the quarterback on the sideline phoning the press box—it is all about the vantage point! And Paul is not talking to an assistant coach. No! Paul has the one true God on the phone. Paul is joyful because he sees his circumstances from God's perspective. So, Paul is confident in what is happening to him was being used by God to advance the gospel.

You and I should invest time and energy into consulting God on what is happening in our lives. God has the better vantage point. He sees all the pieces at once, while we are fixated on a paltry few.

The Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Phillipi will challenge you to seek God's perspective and live in the joy of knowing everything is going to be OK in the end. Not that there aren't some

tough times ahead, but you can have joy in knowing the outcome is in very capable hands. And He will show you glimpses of what He is doing if you listen and look through prayer.

May God richly bless you today. I'm Dr. Kenny Smith, for Cross Chapel Ministries.